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ABSTRACT

This study determined the percentage and kinds of use of children's magazines in the Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Public Library and developed a user profile. Observation in the children's room, conducted for 31 hours over a six week period, found that: (1) a little over six percent of the people who enter the children's room use or check out a magazine; (2) fewer than half of those who use a magazine in the library read a magazine article; (3) the magazines that were used most frequently were often not those that had appeared on recommended lists of titles; (4) several patrons seemed unaware of the magazine circulation policy, and others mentioned having some of the same magazine titles at home. Findings of the study indicate a need for a more comprehensive evaluation of the public library's magazine service to determine patrons' needs and interests. An observations chart and a selected bibliography on children's magazines and participant-observation are included. (Author)

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THE USE OF CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY

by

Jane Faust Belsches

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THE USE OF CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY

By

Jane Faust Belsches

A master's paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science

Chapel Hill

April, 1978

Approved by:

_____

Adviser

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This study determined the percentage and kinds of use of children's magazines in the Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Public Library. A user profile was also developed. Observation in the children's room was conducted for thirty-one hours over a six-week period to gather data for the study.

A little over six percent of the people who enter the children's room use or check out a magazine. Fewer than half of those who use a magazine in the library read an article in the magazine. The magazines that were used most frequently were often not those that had appeared on recommended lists of titles. Several patrons seemed unaware of the magazine circulation policy, and others mentioned having some of the same magazine titles at home. Findings of the study indicated a need for a more comprehensive evaluation of the public library's magazine service to determine patrons' needs and interests.

Headings:

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Acknowledgement

Grateful appreciation to the staff of the Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Public Library for permitting me to utilize the children's room for the location of this study.

I. Introduction

Today many public libraries with children's programs and elementary school libraries subscribe to several magazines written especially for children. Many educators and librarians hold the belief that this format has value and purpose for children. They believe the chief value of children's magazines lies in the variety and uniqueness of their contents and in the primary information that is provided on current events. Children's magazines also offer a unique opportunity for reader-writer exchange. In the library setting, the presence of magazines encourages children to read in the library, rather than to use it merely as a place from which to borrow books.

Children often respond positively to the magazine concept, especially on a subscription basis since they feel a sense of importance when their own copies arrive in the mail. This regular arrival of the magazines may help some children form more consistent reading habits. The magazine format permits scanning and sampling which, along with the brevity of the features, appeals to many children. Slow readers may be especially attracted to the brief articles and may be more inclined to read magazines than books since no stigma is attached to a child who reads magazines.

Standards for both public and school library service include recommendations for provision of children's magazines

in a library setting. The Standards for Children's Services in Public Libraries published in 1964 includes periodicals in the list of necessary supplementary materials that should be provided by the public library to aid in the total cultural and educational development of the child.[1] The quantitative recommendation for elementary schools given in the 1975 edition of the national school library standards entitled Media Programs: District and School is subscription to a minimum of fifty magazine titles.[2]

Many librarians have complied with the recommendations made in these two sets of standards and have thus accepted the responsibility of providing children with access to the magazine format. The usefulness of such a service should be evaluated frequently. Anne Billeter in a recent article in Illinois Libraries recommends that the circulation rate and amount of inhouse use of each magazine subscribed to be determined in such an evaluation. She also encourages librarians to recognize the possibility that in some communities most of the titles subscribed to by the library are superflucus because children already have them at home. Ms. Billeter suggests that the children be asked their preferences in a written questionnaire answered in the library or sent home or in an oral question asked at the circulation desk as materials are checked out.[3]

Even though every aspect of a magazine subscription service needs to be evaluated, this study focused on several isolated parts of the service provided by a small public

library. It is hoped that in the future a more comprehensive analysis of the service might be undertaken by members of the library staff. Techniques similar to those mentioned by Ms. Billeter in her article in Illinois Libraries might be utilized for a study of this kind. The present study should only serve as an initial step in the evaluative process.

II. The Problem of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the percentage and kinds of use of children's magazines in a public library setting and to develop a user profile. The study was begun with the assumption that children's magazines receive little use in a library setting.

The term children's magazines, as used in this study, refers only to those magazines written for children under the age of thirteen as the intended primary audience. Some children's rooms and elementary school libraries also subscribe to adult and family magazines that may be of interest and utility to children in the upper elementary grades. The percentage and kinds of use of these adult titles were not included in this study.

Even though children are the primary audience for children's magazines, people of all ages use them. This study included users of all ages. The term user profile refers to a summary of the average characteristics of the users, such as age, sex, and race.

The examination of the use of children's magazines was limited to the Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Public Library. Thirty-one hours of observation over a six-week period in the middle of the school year were conducted. These limitations require that caution be exercised in generalizing the

conclusions of this study to other times of the year, to other localities, and to other types of libraries.

III. Literature Review

A review of the literature written during the past twelve years on the subject of children's magazines revealed little information concerning the percentages or kinds of use in library settings. The value of children's magazines, as well as past and present trends, children's interest levels, and recommended magazine titles, were frequently discussed in education and library publications. Even though this information was not directly related to the evaluation of the amount and types of use magazines receive in a library setting, some of the major points found in the literature will be presented in this chapter to provide a framework from which the present study can be approached.

Children's interest in magazines

A study indirectly related to the present one was conducted by George W. Norvell in 1962. He examined the degree of interest children in grades 3-6 had in the thirty-one periodicals found on a list he had compiled of children's and adult magazine titles. Mr. Norvell believed that his study added to the evidence that periodicals are important both in the education and recreation of children. In his concluding remarks he stated: "Children of the elementary grades place the reading of their favorite magazines and newspapers near the top of enjoyable pursuits, and will continue to do this

throughout their lives--if they follow their elders."[4]

The data of his study revealed that nine-to-twelve-year-old boys and girls were acquainted with an average of ten magazines and that not more than one or two children in a hundred were entirely unacquainted with this format. On the boys' list of most popular magazines, three of the top four were edited for adults. Only one of the top four on the girls' list was an adult title. When the interest scores of girls and boys were combined, six of the top fifteen titles were published for adults. In almost every instance of the study, children's magazines intended for both boys and girls were scored higher by girls than boys. Eight-year-old boys in the study gave three adult magazines a much higher average rating than they gave to the seven magazines on the list that were planned specifically for children. When the thirty-one magazines were arranged by frequency of acquaintance among the children, seven of the ten most widely known were adult titles. This high frequency of acquaintance with adult titles may be due to home subscriptions by many of the children's families. The greater acquaintance by the children with these titles may help to explain the high degree of interest shown in many of the adult titles included in the study.

Present state of children's magazines

Although children's magazines have been a part of American society for over one hundred years, an article entitled "Are Children's Magazines Dying on the Vine?" appeared in the April 1976 issue of Catholic Library World. The author

of this article forecasts the demise of this literary format because few of today's publishers are willing or able to take the risk involved in marketing this material.[6] The dependence of magazines upon advertising as the producer of profit has caused children's magazines to be a less than profitable investment at times. The list of over one hundred English language children's magazines in Ulrich's International Periodical Directory indicates that many editors and publishers still feel a need to produce material especially written for children. The circulation figures for several of the titles listed in Ulrich's exceed one million, so death for these titles, at least, does not appear to be imminent.

The quality of many of the magazines presently being published for children is of concern to many people. In 1964 the Magazine Evaluation Committee of the Children's Services Division of the American Library Association conducted a survey to determine which children's magazines should be recommended for library purchase. The two conclusions reached by the committee were: 1) "no magazine for children is absolutely vital or is highly recommended" and 2) there are many adult magazine titles that are giving important service in work with children in school and public libraries.[7] A list of magazines that are often useful for schools and children's rooms in public libraries was included in the committee report. Those titles listed for first purchase were American Girl, American Junior Red Cross News, Boys' Life, Plays, and Junior Scholastic.[8]

In 1965 the committee conducted a new survey in response

to librarians' requests for a list of magazine titles suitable for home purchase since patrons frequently request such a list. The titles included on this list were Highlights, American Girl, Boys' Life, and Children's Digest.[9] The committee members agreed that despite the shortcomings of present children's magazines, the format holds high possibilities.

A discussion of the current state of children's magazines in 1968 in The Reading Teacher entitled "Magazines for Children" begins:

> In their heyday children's magazines comprised an event. . . [they] sustained a child's interest over many formative years, contributing to the pattern of his life.
>
> Not so today. By most standards, modern magazines for children at best are a diversion or a supplement, not an event.[10]

The reasons given for this change are: 1) most magazines today are categorized by sex, grade level, special interests, and other factors so that one periodical does not serve all of childhood; 2) the quantity and quality of children's books have increased tremendously; and 3) adult buyers desire "educational" material for their children with the result that modern magazines include textbookish information that is aimed at parents' interests, rather than children's.[11]

The writer of the previously mentioned article in Catholic Library World complains:

> On the whole, today's periodicals have axes to grind; they are not designed to entertain boys and girls with interesting information or to help them escape from the terrifying world of too-much-ness. Instead of being a friend to its readers, the typical so-called magazine of today hammers away at ideological goals.[12]

The termination of the weeklies and monthlies that were

considered suitable for the serious-minded children of Britain is lamented in an article in The Times Educational Supplement entitled "Magazines Fade Away." The writer of the article hopes that the worthwhile journals that have disappeared in the past two years will be reestablished and that the existing ones will be preserved so that "the spate of American-style comics which are rapidly replacing them" can be stopped.[13]

Magazine recommendations

Frequent lists are compiled of recommended magazine titles for children. Approximately every two years, Childhood Education publishes such a list. In their prefatory remarks, the editors express their hope that the magazines and newspapers listed will "enhance pleasure in reading and contribute to the development of a style of life which eventually encompasses the reading of adult magazines and newspapers."[14] Nancy Larrick publishes A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading periodically, and she includes a list of magazines "with child appeal" that also will have a "positive influence on a child's taste, sense of values, and sense of fun."[15] An article entitled "The Evaluation of Magazines for Children Under Eight" in School Librarian suggests possible criteria to be used for evaluative purposes. These include: 1) editorial policy; 2) originality, interest, and variety in story features; 3) language; 4) illustration and coloring; 5) special educational features; 6) puzzles and pastimes; 7) contact with readers; 8) advertisements or other items of

negative value; and 9) size and price.[16]

Despite the recent trends in children's magazines, many librarians continue to subscribe to at least a few titles. Consideration of the findings of interest studies like that conducted by Mr. Norvell and referral to several lists of recommended titles might aid in increasing the effectiveness of this service. Despite the value of such literature, it should never be used as a substitute for first-hand observation and evaluation of the magazine subscription service in a particular library.

IV. Methodology

An adaptation of the participant-observer research technique was the methodology used for this study. This technique has several advantages for a study of this kind. During participant-observation, groups of people are observed in their natural contexts, and data is obtained from direct contact with them in this given situation. Other research techniques such as interviews, questionnaires, and life-histories create special situations, and information is obtained apart from a natural context. The researcher who observes a situation is able to absorb much information that may appear irrelevant at the time, but which may later prove to be extremely valuable. Actions and remarks which reveal a person's true motivation or attitude may be seen and overheard. The inclusion of anecdotal material in the research data may provide insights not possible using other more formalized research techniques. Such anecdotal material and other variables that are difficult to quantify are distorted less in reporting the results of a study using the observer technique. Each situation that is observed can be exploited to yield the most helpful and relevant data for statistical purposes. The usage of this technique avoids the danger of receiving responses from only atypical or maladjusted individuals of the community being studied since all members are

being observed, not just those who volunteer to participate in the study. Because complete objectivity in social research is difficult to achieve, in participant observation the researcher must become aware of any personal observational biases. This awareness should increase the objectivity of the study.

No interaction with the group being observed occurred in this study. Library staff expressed a desire that library operations remain undisturbed during the observation hours, and the preservation of the natural context of the situation being observed is essential in a study of this kind. The collection of data was limited to that which could be observed and overheard. Abstract variables such as motivation and purpose could not be determined unless a telling remark was overheard or a revealing action was seen. The sample for this study was totally dependent upon the library patrons who were present during the hours of observation.

Location of the study

The children's room of the Chapel Hill Public Library is located in the basement of the building and has a separate outside entrance, as well as an inside one. The library subscribes to twelve children's magazines. Six of those subscribed to appeared on Ms. Larrick's list of recommended magazine titles. They are Cricket, Children's Digest, Ebony, Jr., Highlights, Humpty Dumpty, and Ranger Rick. The other magazines subscribed to are American Girl, Boys' Life, Electric Company, Jack and Jill, National Geographic World, and Sesame

Street.

The magazines are housed on one side of two standard counter-height bookcases located in the center of the children's room. Several tables and chairs are placed on both sides of the bookcases, and the circulation desk is nearby. The current issue of each magazine is placed in a plastic binder and then laid on top of the stack of back issues of that magazine. A limit of four back issues may be checked out for a period of two weeks. Use of the current issues is limited to the children's room. No sign indicates the location of the magazines in the room or describes the magazine circulation policy. No labels are found on the shelves to identify each stack of magazines, even though the adjoining shelves containing paperback books are labeled "fiction" and "non-fiction."

Observation hours

Before the study began, library staff in the children's room suggested several time periods for observation when more children might be present in the children's room. The suggested times were Wednesday afternoons when a day care group visits the library, Thursday afternoons when a Story Hour for pre-school children is held, Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and weeknights early in the week. Observation hours were necessarily limited by academic and work schedules. Sixteen different periods of observation which ranged in length from 1 to 3½ hours were conducted during all of the times suggested

by the staff and during additional hours throughout the week. Over 7 hours of observation were conducted on Saturdays, 6½ hours on Wednesdays, almost 6 hours on Sundays and Mondays, 2½ hours on Fridays, and 1½ hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Six hours of observation were conducted during the evening hours of library operation, but less than an hour of observation occurred during the morning hours of library operation.

Procedure

An observations chart was maintained during the hours of observation to record the data to be used in formulating conclusions about the percentage and kinds of use of children's magazines and in developing a user profile. A copy of the observations chart is found in the Appendix.

For each patron observed using a children's magazine, the following categories on the chart were marked: sex, race, estimated age, alone or with group, use of books, previous use, total number used, and information about each magazine used which included name, length of use, current or back issue, where used, and description of use. Anecdotal records were maintained for any information which could not be adequately noted on the categories on the chart. In recording the observations, care had to be taken to avoid making hasty inferences about motivation, purpose, and other abstract variables.

For the purposes of this study, a use of a magazine occurred when the cover was opened, either while the magazine was still on the shelf or after it was picked up and moved to

another location. If a person stopped to glance at a cover but never opened it, no record of a use was made. If a magazine was both checked out and used in the library by the same person on the same day, the magazine was considered to have been used only once by that patron.

To give a basis for comparison in determining the percentage of patron use, a tally was kept of the number of patrons present in the children's room during the observation hours. Since anyone who passed through the children's room was a potential user of a children's magazine, all persons who entered the room from either the inside or outside entrances were counted in the user tally. An exception was made for infants carried into the room; they were not included in this tally. Each person was counted in the tally only once per day. The accuracy of this tally was dependent upon the observer's memory of faces, since many people passed through the children's room several times during the observation hours on a given day.

Several of the categories on the observations chart require brief explanations. Only an estimate could be made of the age of the user and the length of use of each magazine. Determination of the category "alone or with group" depended upon the observer's noticing whether the user was accompanied by another person or group of people. Only if no one appeared to be accompanying the user was he/she considered to be alone. Careful observation was required to determine whether books were also used or checked out. Since the circulation desk is near the magazines, it was not too difficult to see whether

books were checked out. For this study, the use of a book was defined the same as the use of a magazine was defined. Merely looking at the cover of a book was not considered to be a use of a book. The determination of whether a patron had previously used magazines during observation hours depended upon the memory of the observer. Only when the observer was certain of a repeated use was this category marked.

V. Findings

Percentage of patron use

During the thirty-one hours of observation, 832 patrons entered the children's room and 52 of them used a magazine. This was an average of 27 patrons an hour and 2 magazine users an hour. For each of the sixteen observation periods, a percentage was calculated for the number of patrons who used magazines. Table 1 contains the patron and user totals and percentage of use for each observation period.

As seen in the table, the highest percentage of use was almost 16 percent which occurred on a Monday evening. The second highest percentage of 10 percent occurred on both a Sunday and a Friday afternoon. Two percent was the next to lowest score, and it occurred during two Saturday afternoon observation periods. A zero use percentage occurred twice, on a Monday night and on a Wednesday night. The average use percentage for the entire observation period was 6.25 percent, and the median use percentage was 3.9 percent.

Number of magazines used and length of use

The number of magazines used during the observation period totalled 137. This was an average of 2.6 magazines per user. Over twice as many back issues as current ones were used. Only sixteen magazines were checked out. The twelve magazines are ranked by amount of use in table 2. Information

TABLE 1

PATRON AND USER TOTALS AND PERCENTAGE OF PATRON USE

Time	Patron Tally	Users	Percentage of patron use
Sunday 2:50-4:35	62	6	9.7
Monday 2:15-5:15	90	4	4.4
Wednesday 3:50-5:00	62	2	3.2
Saturday 11:45-1:35	57	1	1.8
Sunday 2:05-4:50	135	9	6.7
Wednesday 7:05-8:55	20	0	0.0
Saturday 12:10-2:30	100	4	4.0
Sunday 3:15-4:35	87	3	3.5
Monday 7:10-8:25	19	3	15.8
Thursday 3:55-5:25	79	3	3.8
Saturday 1:40-2:40	40	1	2.5
Wednesday 1:40-5:10	115	5	4.4
Friday 2:20-4:50	52	5	9.6
Monday 7:15-8:50	19	0	0.0
Tuesday 7:35-9:00	26	1	3.9
Saturday 12:50-3:05	69	5	7.3
Total	832	52	6.25 (average)

about types of users, place of use, and length of use are also included in this table.

TABLE 2

MAGAZINES RANKED BY USE

Magazine	Times Used	Users		Place of Use		Length of Use (min.)	Average Length (min.)
		C[1]	A[2]	L[3]	CO[4]		
Electric Company	29	24	3	27	2	114.0	4.2
Boys' Life	20	5	0	19	1	55.0	2.9
Jack and Jill	17	4	2	16	1	29.5	1.8
Sesame Street	15	9	1	14	1	35.0	2.5
Ranger Rick	13	5	2	10	3	9.0	0.9
National Geographic World	9	3	3	8	1	49.0	6.0
Highlights	8	2	0	7	1	30.5	4.3
Humpty Dumpty	8	6	1	5	3	13.0	1.6
Ebony, Jr.	6	4	0	6	0	8.0	1.33
Cricket	5	1	3	2	3	2.5	1.25
American Girl	4	2	1	4	0	6.0	1.5
Children's Digest	3	3	0	3	0	2.5	0.75
Total	137	68	16	121	16	354.0	2.9 (average)

[1]Child
[2]Adult
[3]Library
[4]Checked Out

The magazine that received the greatest amount of use and was used by the most people was Electric Company. It was used by twenty-five patrons in the library for a total of almost two hours, and copies were checked out by two patrons. The average length of use of each copy of Electric Company was a little over four minutes. National Geographic World received the highest average length of use per copy with six minutes per use. American Girl, Children's Digest, Cricket, Ebony, Jr., and Ranger Rick were each used by fewer than six people and received less than ten minutes of use during the entire observation period. Ranger Rick and Children's Digest had the lowest average length of use per magazine with less than one minute per use in the library. All of these titles which fared poorly in the present study had appeared on the recommended lists mentioned previously in this report. Electric Company appeared on no recommended list that was read before the study began.

It was interesting to discover that ten of the sixteen magazines that were checked out during the observation period were titles on Ms. Larrick's recommended list. Adults checked out eight of these ten magazines.

Perhaps the relative newness of some of the titles subscribed to by the Chapel Hill Public Library explains their absence from lists of recommended titles. Four of the twelve magazines subscribed to have been established within the past five years; they are Cricket(1973), Ebony, Jr.(1973), Electric Company(1974), and National Geographic World(1975. Both Cricket

and Ebony, Jr. are included on Ms. Larrick's list of recommended titles which was published in 1975. She may have been unaware of the two most recent magazines, or they may not have been in existence when her list was compiled. Similar lists will undoubtedly be published in the future, so the acceptance of these more recent titles can be determined at that time.

Kinds of use

The kinds of use observed ranged from a brief opening of the cover for a glance at the first page to a careful reading of most, or all, of the contents which sometimes lasted over twenty minutes. The average length of use for all of the magazines was almost three minutes per copy. Table 3 contains information about the kinds of use observed during the study.

TABLE 3

KINDS OF USE

Description of Use	Number Observed
Flipped pages only	27
Opened cover only	7
Looked at pages only	21
Flipped pages and looked at pages	13
Flipped pages, read articles	3
Flipped pages, looked at pages, read articles	2
Looked at pages, read articles	3
Read articles only	10
Looked at table of contents, read articles	18
Looked at table of contents, flipped pages, looked at pages, read articles	17
Total	121

Seven users merely opened the cover. Twenty-seven flipped through at least a few of the pages, and thirteen flipped through pages and paused to look at a few of them. Twenty-one users looked at most of the pages as they were turned. This group of users comprised 57 percent of the total group observed in the library.

The other 43 percent of the users read at least one article or cartoon or worked one puzzle in the magazines. Some of these users consulted the table of contents to find what they read and others stopped to read while flipping the pages or looking at the pictures. Three of this group of users looked in every issue of a magazine at a particular cartoon or puzzle.

User profile

The average age of the fifty-two magazine users was estimated to be twelve years of age, and the median age was ten. Nine adults used or checked out magazines, and ten pre-school-age children were users. There were twelve more male than female users. All but seven users were white; only six users were alone; and thirty-six users checked out books or used books while in the library. Even though several users visited the library during more than one observation period, no repeated use of a magazine by these patrons was observed.

Based upon the findings of this study, the average user of magazines in the Chapel Hill Public Library's children's room will be male,, twelve years old, and white; he will be accompanied by another person and will also use or check out

books while in the library. He will use three back issues of magazines per visit for approximately three minutes each. He is most likely to use Electric Company, and he will probably only look at the pictures or flip through them, rather than read a particular article or work a puzzle.

Anecdotal material

By observing and listening to all that occurred during the observation period in the children's room, several trends were noticed which directly related to the use of children's magazines.

Parents often accompanied their children to the library and then left them in the children's room while they went upstairs to the adult collection. At least eight of the observed magazine users were children who looked at magazines while they waited for their parents to return for them. The location of the magazines near the circulation desk prompted several parents to suggest that the children look at a magazine while they were gone upstairs.

The attempt by magazine editors to attract attention by placing familiar faces on the cover was frequently successful during this observation period. Three children recognized characters from television shows on the covers of the magazines. One boy screamed "comics" when he saw the cover of Ebony, Jr. and kept repeating the word as he turned the pages. Another little girl recognized the Sesame Street characters and wanted the magazine, but her brother told her it was comics and gave her Electric Company instead.

Brothers and sisters and friends often shared articles or pictures in the magazines. One little boy asked an older brother to read a cartoon to him. Three times older children gave a particular magazine to a younger child to look at. Five times magazines in the library were compared to magazines at home with comments such as "Oh, look, I have this magazine at home," or "It's different from the book at home."

Four times parents discouraged the use of magazines by their children. Twice children took a stack of magazines and showed them to their parents; their parents told them they were old copies so the magazines were returned to the shelves unused. Two other times children wanted to check out copies of a particular magazine, but their parents told them they had to be used in the library. The children then returned the magazines to the shelves unused.

VI. Conclusions

The study was begun with the assumption that magazines receive little use in a library setting. According to the findings of this study, a little over six percent of the people who enter the children's room of the Chapel Hill Public Library use or check out a magazine. Fewer than half of the people who use a magazine in the library read an article in the magazine. Use of the magazines was limited, but the percentage of patron use exceeded original expectations.

Even though the lengths and kinds of use varied widely among the magazine users, enough time was spent reading articles and cartoons and looking at pictures and puzzles to justify having a few magazines in the library. The presence of the magazines served a purpose for those children who were waiting for their parents and possibly for others.

After comparing the magazines that received the greatest amount of use to those that appeared on the recommended lists, it appears that the librarian is faced with a dilemma. The magazines with popular appeal frequently had little resemblance to those that appeared on the recommended lists. Even though quality is desired, the findings of this study seem to indicate that the magazines with popular appeal must be subscribed to if children's magazines are to receive any appreciable use in a library setting. A survey of users' desires and interests would aid in selecting the titles which

would most likely appeal to library patrons.

From the comments overheard during the observation hours about patrons having some of the same magazines at home, the library staff may find it worthwhile to conduct a survey to determine the extent of patron subscription to the titles subscribed to by the library. This survey could be combined with one which surveyed patrons' interests and desired magazine titles.

This exploratory evaluation of the library's service of providing subscriptions to children's magazines revealed that the circulation policy is unclear to several of the patrons. The advantage of the location of the magazines near the circulation desk might be maximized through the usage of signs and labels and a more attractive and prominent display of the magazines. The magazines are presently noticed by some patrons, but possibly more would be interested in using them if they knew of their presence in the library and the magazine circulation policy.

Several small experiments might be conducted by the library staff as an extension of this study such as labeling the shelves which house the magazines or changing the location or display of the magazines in the room to determine the effect of such a change on the amount and kinds of use of the magazines. Articles from the magazines could be included in the weekly Story Hour as a means of increasing the children's awareness of their contents and of their presence in the library. A study similar to the present one might be

conducted at other times of the day and year and over a longer period of time to test the reliability of the findings. Other localities may be interested in conducting similar studies to compare their results with those of the present study. Children in the community, as well as teachers, parents, and others who might use the magazines need to be consulted to determine their title preferences and the type of circulation policy they would recommend. If samples of magazines could be obtained from publishers, a review committee could be established to familiarize themselves with titles they might not otherwise ever see or know about. Recommendations could then be made for titles to be subscribed to by the library.

Observation studies utilizing the same technique as the present study can be conducted to evaluate other areas of library service such as the use of reference books in the children's room and the circulation of phonograph records and of toys. An initial study of this sort might reveal findings which would indicate the need for a change in policy or the need for elimination or extension of a service. Library routines do not need to be disturbed by studies of this kind, and more effective service may be the end result.

Notes

1. Public Library Association Committee on Standards. Subcommittee on Standards for Children's Service, Standards for Children's Services in Public Libraries (Chicago: American Library Association, 1964), p. 21.

2. American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, Media Programs: District and School (Chicago: American Library Association and Washington, D.C.: Association for Educational Communication and Technology, 1975), p. 71.

3. Anne Billeter, "Research and Evaluation in the Administration of Children's Work in the Public Library," Illinois Libraries 57 (January 1975): 11.

4. George W. Norvell, "The Challenge of Periodicals in Education," Elementary English 18 (April 1966): 408.

5. Ibid., pp. 402-4.

6. Ada C. Rose, "Are Children's Magazines Dying on the Vine?" Catholic Library World 47 (April 1976): 371.

7. Elizabeth Johnson, "Hobson's Choice: Or, What Periodicals for Children?" Top of the News 20 (May 1964): 307.

8. Ibid., pp. 307-8.

9. Elizabeth Johnson, "Magazines for Home Purchase," Top of the News 21 (June 1965): 354.

10. Sam Leaton Sebesta, "Magazines for Children," The Reading Teacher 22 (October 1968): 73.

11. Ibid., pp. 73,75.

12. Rose, "Are Children's Magazines Dying on the Vine?" p. 371.

13. Juliet Clough, "Magazines Fade Away," The Times Educational Supplement 5 January 1968, p. 22.

14. "Magazines and Newspapers for Children," Childhood Education 46 (May 1970): 443.

15. Nancy Larrick, A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading, 4th ed. (New York: Bantam, 1975), p. 340.

16. Alasdair Campbell and Eileen Smith, "The Evaluation of Magazines for Children Under Eight," School Librarian 17 (September 1969): 234-37.

Appendix
Observations Chart

Date:	Time:	User Tally:		
Category	User	User	User	User
Sex (M,F)				
Race (W,B,O,I)				
Estimated age				
Alone or with group(A,G)				
Were books also used or checked out? (No,U,CO)				
Had magazines been used before during observation hours? (Yes,No)				
Total number of magazines used				
For each magazine used, give the following information: a. Name b. Where used--in library or check out(L,CO) c. If used in library approximate length of use d. Current or back issue(C,B) e. Description of use				
Additional Comments				

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